

PROLOGUE:

# THE UNITED SYSTEMS!

FOR NEARLY TWO HUNDRED YEARS THIS WIDE AND SPRAWLING DEMOCRACY HAS THRIVED, EXTENDING ITS BOUNDARIES INEXORABLY ACROSS THE FRONTIERS OF SPACE.

THOSE EARLY PIONEERS ARE NOW IMMORTALISED IN THE FAMOUS **JOBLING MUSEUM**, ORBITING THE PLANET **PERSEPHONE**.....



CPT. JONSON J.

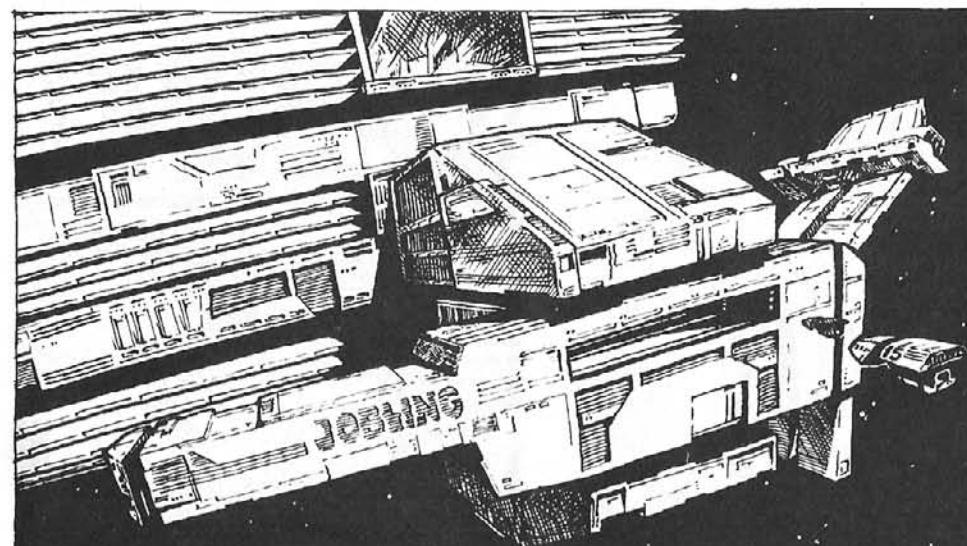
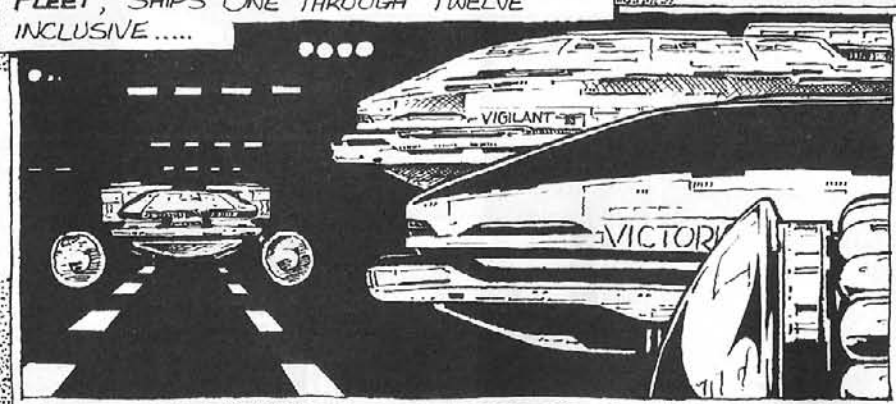


CPT. OLIVER M.

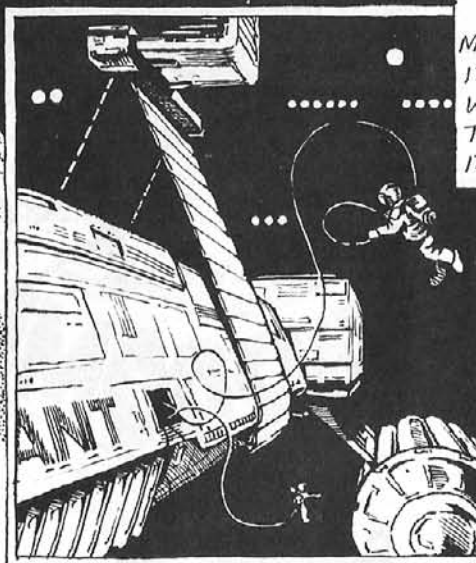


CPT. MCKENZIE G.

AND THEIR FLEET: THE LEGENDARY UNITED SYSTEMS SURVEY FLEET, SHIPS ONE THROUGH TWELVE INCLUSIVE.....



THESE MIGHTY STARSHIPS MADE THE UNITED SYSTEMS WHAT IT IS TODAY - BUT NOW THEIR WORK IS DONE. STARSHIP TWELVE, THE U.S.S. "**VALIANT**", NOW JOINS ITS FELLOWS IN RETIREMENT.....



HER COMMANDER, CAPTAIN HORAZIO HORAZIO III, STANDS PROUD BESIDE HIS ILLUSTRIOUS PEERS.....



CAPT. HORAZIO III

ONLY ONE STARSHIP REMAINS NOW TO BE RECALLED...

IT IS THE LAST OF ITS KIND - THE LAST OF THE FLEET...

IT IS STARSHIP NUMBER THIRTEEN...

IT IS THE.....

# USS VAGABOND

-BY GRAHAM EDWARDS-

SHIP'S LOG: 10010110

"Dear Diary,  
'Vagabond' landed on  
unexplored planet BB-717.  
Engine repairs underway after  
minor collision with BB-717's  
third moon (see previous entry).  
The towel rail in my  
bathroom is missing....."

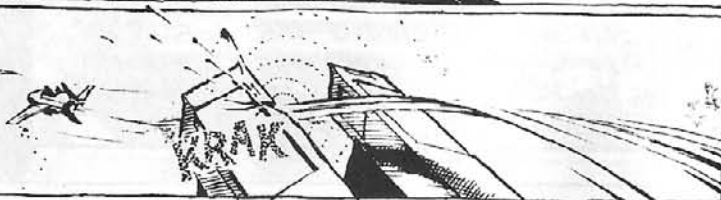
"..... Ship's pilot and navigator  
have taken the opportunity  
to conduct a preliminary  
survey. They are now returning  
in the Survey Airplane....."



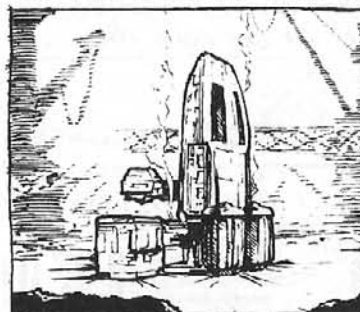
HERE  
TAKE SOME SNAPS,  
DRIPFEED - KEEP  
THE CAPTAIN  
HAPPY.



I HATE  
THE WAY YOU  
DRIVE, WALKMAN!



"..... Am about to claim territory in person, with official Blue Flapmatic flags."

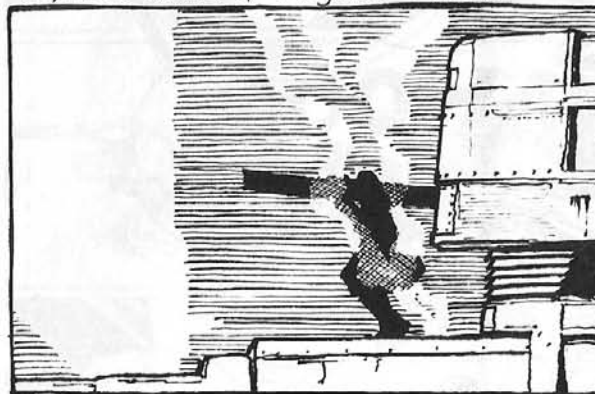


"SIGNED: Captain  
Benjamin Stanforth Crab -  
this day 193~163."



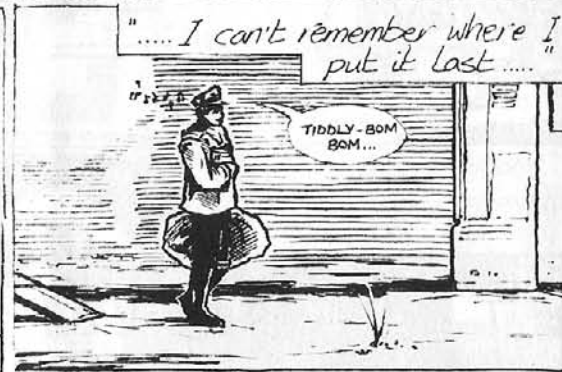
"Oh, and P.S....."

"..... have left the engine repairs in the  
capable hands of Engineer Mikado."





"Dear Diary, remind me to look for the Communications Computer when I'm next on the right deck...."





"Dear Diary,  
in fact, I wonder sometimes  
if I might not be a little  
out of touch with  
everything going on in my  
ship."

# INTERLUDE:

THE PLANET HAD BEEN KNOWN TO  
ITS PEOPLE AS FENDERGRUND. ONCE  
IT WAS GREEN AND FERTILE - BRIGHT  
AND WONDERFUL PLANTS PACKED ITS  
SPACIOUS CONTINENTS WITH A  
DAZZLING MOSAIC OF COLOUR.

THEN CAME THE MACHINE AGE...

FIRST IT WAS STEAM.  
THEN THE PLANTS CHOKED  
AS FOSSIL FUELS WERE  
BURNED AND BOILED.  
THE FUSION CHIMNEYS  
DRAINED THE PRECIOUS  
OCEANS, AND THEN THE  
PLANTS THEMSELVES WERE  
ENSLAVED.

THEY WERE ENGINEERED  
AND MODIFIED. THEY TOUCHED  
THE MACHINES AND BECAME  
PART OF THEM.  
THE MACHINE-PLANTS  
FILLED THE SKIES WITH A  
DOOM-LADEN VISTA OF  
POLLUTION, A BLACKNESS  
WHICH GREW AND THICKENED  
AND SUFFOCATED THE WORLD.

THE PLANTS DIED;  
THE MACHINES BROKE DOWN;  
A CIVILISATION COLLAPSED;  
A PLANET PASSED AWAY.

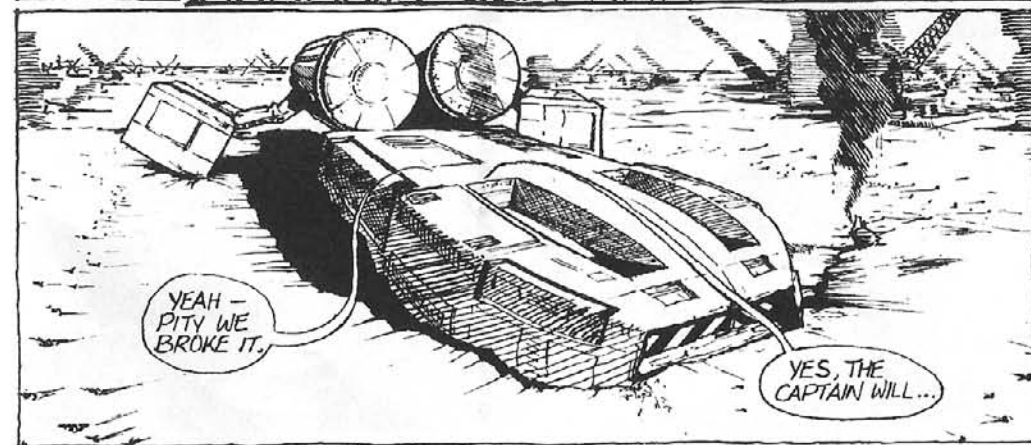
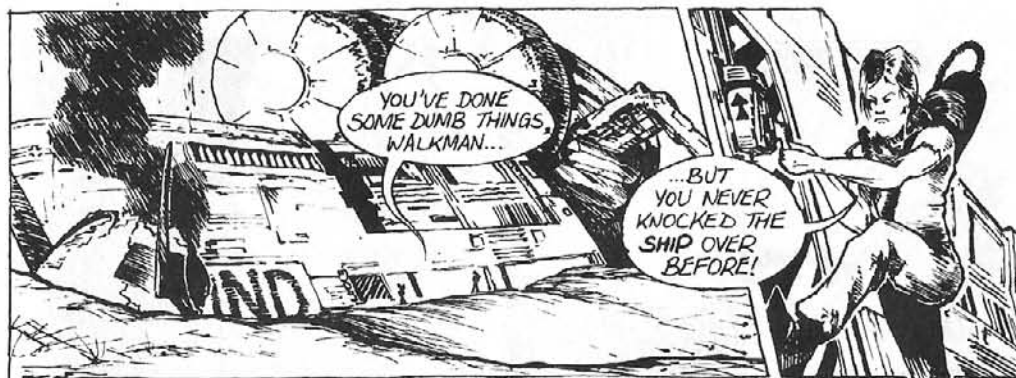
ALL THAT REMAINS IS THE GRAVEYARD.

BUT SOMEWHERE, IN THE WRECKAGE,

SOMETHING REMEMBERS...

...SOMETHING STIRS.





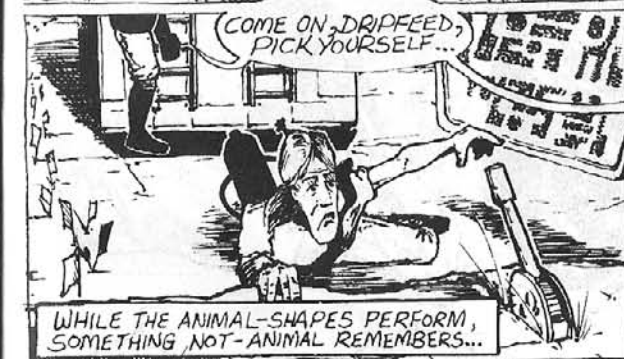




"... I have already laid claim to several kilometres of territory ..."



"... and the mission is progressing according to plan."



WHILE THE ANIMAL-SHAPES PERFORM, SOMETHING NOT-ANIMAL REMEMBERS...



# KACHUNGA!

SOMETHING STIRS...



TIDDLY B...?



MIKADO'LL RESCUE US

ARE YOU KIDDING?



THE LAST OF ITS KIND, THE VEGETABLE DIMLY REMEMBERS THE ANIMAL-SHAPES.

URP?

WUMF!



SNAATCH



THE "VAGABONDS" WON'T TAKE OFF AGAIN IN A MILLION YEARS!



IT DIMLY REMEMBERS THE MACHINE-SHAPES.

SCRUNCH!

UH-OH...





